



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

5 June 1996

Dec Martin

CHAIRMANSHIPS

Thank you for sending me a copy of the proposed new wording for paragraph 4 of the "Scenario for Opening Plenary Session". I am sorry that it was not possible to sort this out last night.

The Prime Minister was not happy with various aspects of the wording which give too much prominence to the role of Senator Mitchell, and even suggest, through the reference to the ground rules paper, that he could get involved in mediation on strand 1 issues. Presentation of Senator Mitchell's role will be very difficult for us in any circumstances, as the reactions of Trimble and Paisley amply demonstrate. It is of course possible to say more about the importance of his role in background briefing, but it should not be highlighted formally in the way it was in the previous text.

I attach a revised version with which the Prime Minister could live. You will see that there are two passages in square brackets. These are fallback positions for use in negotiation with the Irish. The Prime Minister suggests that your Secretary of State starts with the text without square brackets.

The Prime Minister would obviously like to see the text again before final agreement.

Yours ever
John

JOHN HOLMES

Martin Howard Esq
Northern Ireland Office

CONFIDENTIAL

4. The British Government will chair strand 1 of the negotiations. The British and Irish Governments will jointly chair strand 3. There are also aspects of the negotiations which require independent chairmanship. The two Governments have decided to invite a group consisting of Senator George Mitchell, General John de Chastelain and Mr Harry Holkeri to play a role in this area. They have agreed to invite Senator Mitchell, who chaired the International Body on Decommissioning, to chair the [central] plenary sessions, to which the various strands and any sub-committee which the plenary may establish will report. They have also agreed to invite General de Chastelain to chair strand 2. He would also chair the business committee, unless the talks participants, in accordance with the ground rules, were to decide otherwise. They have agreed to invite Mr Holkeri to act as alternate chairman in any of the independent chairmanship roles. [Senator Mitchell, General de Chastelain and Mr Holkeri will also be available to assist the two Governments resolve problems which may arise in the talks.]

I have accordingly prepared a draft statement which the Secretary of State might deploy at a joint press conference with Mr Spring, together with some Q&A material. It is of course not now clear when (or indeed if) this press conference will take place. Rather than submitting the material directly, I thought that it might be worth circulating it to colleagues for any additions or amendments they may wish to suggest. In particular, the draft does not go into much detail about the Agenda or the Procedural Guidelines, and I should be grateful if you could provide a little material on this (perhaps for the Q&A, since I am not sure that the Secretary of State would wish to get into this sort of detail in his opening statement).